

Healing the Masculine and Feminine Separation

A Historical and Theological Proposal for the Household of God

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Introduction

Masculinity and femininity are deeply divided. Not only are the categories of masculinity and femininity fractured, but masculine virtue and feminine strength cannot seem to occupy the same space – the separation is personal.

Although the increasing separation of men and women is apparent in the wider society, the intimate separations within our own homes are the true crisis. To one degree or another, we all come from broken homes, but there is a deep, generational, industrial wound that continues to threaten households today.

Up until quite recently, the definition of “family” was relatively stable, even in the secular West. It is hard to believe that just 27 years ago, there was still enough political will among Democrats for President Bill Clinton to sign the *Defense of Marriage Act* into law, which defined marriage as the legal union between a man and a woman. Even at the turn of the twenty-first century, the majority of Americans still affirmed that a family is a “married couple,” consisting of a man and a woman, with “minor children living together in a common residence.”¹

Yet, the history of the family is not, as John Paul II wrote in his 1981 exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, “a fixed progression towards what is better.”² From the murderous rage in the first family to Noah’s hungover cursing and blessing, the evil one has raged against households from the beginning. “The rains came down and the floods came up, and the walls came’a tumblin’ down.” The history of households isn’t simply progress *or* decay. In every age, homes built upon firm foundations have stood and those built upon sand have fallen, waves of desolation followed by seasons of flourishing, on repeat.

Throughout history and Holy Scripture, the king-father and queen-mother rule as one within every flourishing household. Proverbs 31 begins with King Lemuel reinforcing the teaching of his bride. He praises his bride, the “mother” of his son, even as he admonishes him, “What are you doing, my son?” The king and queen call their son to rule, not as a drunkard, but wisely, as one who knows when to be tender, and when to fiercely defend the poor and the afflicted. Within the king’s house, distinctions are clear, but their unity shines ever more.

The queen is the king’s closest advisor. Lemuel extols his bride as she buys and sells, as she clothes and feeds the “household,” for “her lamp does not go out at night.” Even as the king wisely writes this instruction to his son, wisdom is upon *her* lips. The king and queen are both present, teaching their son. They share the blessings of industry and productivity for the flourishing of the entire household. Man and woman fear the LORD and bless the world as one.

¹ Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History Of American Family Life* (1989), p. 11.

² John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), p. 5.

Industrial Revolutions

A little closer to home, it does not take a historian to notice the “disturbing degradation” of families in our day.³ While the historical situation of the family has seen countless demonstrable improvements since the inception of our nation, over the last 300 years of Industrial Revolution, “American families have undergone a series of far-reaching ‘domestic revolutions’” that have increasingly destabilized homes.⁴ While these upheavals have certainly destabilized men, women and children have been brutally *sacrificed* upon the altars of all of our supposed industrial, technological, and psychological “progress.”⁵ “Even if women [and children] were made unambiguously better off throughout this period... [psychological literature suggests] a fall in measured well-being.”⁶

Before all of the revolutionary social experiments that have defined our recent history, fathers, mothers, children, and sometimes hired workers lived in a “little commonwealth.” In 1831 and 1832, Alexis de Tocqueville famously observed the beginning of the shift from this older conception of the household as a microcosm of the wider society, now beginning to be defined in *contrast* to wider society, as “a haven in a heartless world.”

The new image of home life was beginning to emerge, separate from the world, and increasingly separate from one another. No longer a kingdom of shared education and industry, households were beginning to be built upon the “tenuous basis of affection, compatibility, and mutual interest.”⁷

Unhappy Households

Before industrialization, world wars, and ever innovative technological disruptions, the home was not only a place for procreation, but also the center of education, industry, and commerce. Fathers and mothers worked alongside their children, and children alongside their parents, sharing educational, domestic, and vocational tasks altogether.

In the twenty-first century, homes are not only increasingly no longer places for procreation, but education and any form of production are largely absent – homes have been reduced to

³ JPII, *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴ Mintz & Kellogg, *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁵ The language of “sacrifice” is not unintentional. The blood of women and children has been spilled on the altars of the gods in every age of human history – the altars of Molech (Lev 18:21), Gibeah’s satanic “hospitality” and slaughter of his raped concubine (Jdg 19:22-30), Sanger’s brutal sacrifice of “meaningless, aimless lives” (Alexander Sanger, quoted from Abigail Favale, *The Genesis of Gender: A Christian Theory*, p. 89) which has continued in our Freudian hyper-sexualized, medicalized present-day philosophy of happiness at all cost (cf Jonathan Grant, *Divine Sex: A Compelling Vision for Christian Relationships in a Hypersexualized Age*, p. 34-37).

⁶ Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, *The Paradox of Declining Female Happiness*, p. 3. [<https://docs.iza.org/dp4200.pdf>]

⁷ Mintz & Kellogg, *Ibid.*, p. 15-16.

consumption and individual affirmation – leaving us fat, isolated, and unhappy. Then husband and wife team of historian, Stevin Mintz, and anthropologist, Susan Kellogg, conclude,

“The paradox of the modern American family is that while we attach far greater psychological and ideological significance to a happy family life than did our ancestors, our work lives, our emphasis on personal fulfillment, and our political behavior all conflict with strong, stable family bonds.”⁸

The data supports what we all know to be true by experience – everything seems better, and yet, there’s an ever present sense of discomfort and division – this distancing has left us confused at best or paralyzed at worst. What is clear is that fathers have increasingly left the home en masse over the course of our brief history as a nation. And even if dad “comes home from work,” he increasingly checks out – he has nothing left for his bride, no energy for even the simplest tasks or to jump on the trampoline with his kids. This industrial separation is perhaps even greater within the households of priests.⁹

More and more with every generation, this is the same story for moms. The household has long since ceased to be a place for meaningful instruction and production, so understandably, mothers have left the home too. Not only were women never meant to be alone in the household, the home should never have been reduced to be a place of menial tasks and vacuous consumption. Women have long desired to return to using their God-given talents in the wider *oikonomia*¹⁰, so they have left their broken homes to use their gifts in our broken society.

With both father and mother gone, children have been left to fend for themselves within schools, industrial houses of secular catechesis. Unsurprisingly, many children *rebel* from their families of origin, leaving their closest support structure for an opposing group. Others *retreat*, remaining within their same structure and building higher walls to keep “them” out. Whether in rebellion or retreat, American families are more divided than ever, and our crumbling social institutions – the new centers of education, industry, and commerce – divide deeper and deeper into ghettos of sameness.¹¹

We cannot simply snap our fingers and magically go back to a pre-industrial world.¹² The biblical ideal of a king and queen ruling within the household as one seems impossibly out of

⁸ Mintz & Kellogg, *Ibid.*, p. 23. These distinguished scholars, now divorced, literally co-authored the history of family in America. Apropos, I think.

⁹ See especially, Barnabas Piper, *The Pastor's Kid: Finding Your Own Faith and Identity*.

¹⁰ *Oikos* means “house.” *Oikonomia*, from which we get our word “economy,” means “household management.”

¹¹ Sameness can be manifest in same-sex relationships (whether sexual or not), political party, exclusive online groups, or AI-curated feeds specifically tailored to our preferences. For the breakdown of mediating institutions and trends of gathering into increasingly divided groups based upon sameness, see, Ben Sasse, *Them: Why We Hate Each Other—And How to Heal*. For a summary of discontentment and dissatisfaction in pursuing personal satisfaction (like an addict), see, Jonathan Grant, *Divine Sex, Ibid.*, p. 29-53.

¹² Nor should we truly want to go back. We are fools if we simplistically spurn all industrial progress.

reach. Should we simply smash our mobile phones into pieces and live in a distinctly Christian house of sameness?¹³ What can we do? What should we do?

A Post-Industrial Opportunity

The last 75 years has seen a steady stream of admonitions to return to the idyllic picture of the 1950s household, with mom and dad and children seated around a table for family meals. But that “Golden Age” of households was already structurally broken. Every return to “family values” by politicians over recent decades hasn’t worked. With largely, still-divided, industrial assumptions, churches have built massive children’s ministries, gymnasiums and education spaces which append nearly every sanctuary. Do we need less programs? Do we need a “family ministry” philosophy? Is the church too feminine?¹⁴ There are so many separations, it is hard to know who’s right and where to begin.¹⁵

One thing that I do know – everything that I will propose below will be harder. The evil one wants nothing more than for us to pursue easy, industrially divided, sub-Christian answers. Individual households and the household of God have been separating for generations – we *cannot* heal our deep wounds in one household or in one generation – we must not foolishly give the medicine in one dose, or we will kill the patient. We can, over time, question every industrial assumption. We can debunk every simplistic modern dogma. Every day, each person in the household, both in the Church and in their individual households, can take tangible steps to be *more present* at home. We gather, and we are sent out, to do this harder, intimate work that God has given us to do.

With every new person who gathers together in an intimate space with others – a home is, by definition, the most intimate of all communities – that gathering becomes exponentially more complicated with each new face added to the family. Every unique soul and each diverse personality multiplies interactions never before seen in the history of the world. Each man and

¹³ A “Christian house of sameness” is my provocative description for the monastery. Following many others, I will appeal below to monastic wisdom for our post-industrial age – gathering in categories of sameness is not all bad, maybe even necessary for a time – but more separation is not the answer, and certainly not for the diverse household of God. There is something to be said about simplifying life by retreating into exclusively masculine and feminine spaces, which we should still employ within the Church. The grace of exclusively masculine and feminine spaces – distorted and coopted by various godless enclaves of ideology – must be reclaimed by the Church.

¹⁴ If you’re into data, Aaron Renn has copiously documented this crisis of masculinity for at least the last 7 years – <https://aaronrenn.substack.com/p/newsletter-1-the-trouble-with-men> – there are countless links and footnotes to chase in that direction. Real data is important, but data doesn’t transform.

¹⁵ A brief, personal aside. My mother was both the nursery coordinator at our church and she ran a home daycare. From my earliest days, I was always around children. I was that strange high school boy who worked in an elementary after-school program, was certified in CPR, and moonlighted occasionally as a babysitter. My first son was born while in my third year of seminary, and I stayed home with him four days a week as my wife went to work. In my first full-time pastoral position, I closed our physical church offices, setup distributed systems for communications, and stepped-down to a part-time position. This was better for our church, and it was better for our family. Everything that I have, was received. And everything that I’ll propose below, I’ve actually tried and am still trying. Until the *parousia*, every life, every family, every church will be an *experiment*. Our Lord must show mercy.

each woman comes into the household of God with unique dreams and fears, joys and sorrows, virtues and vices – to say nothing of biology, age, culture, religion, and life circumstance. Diversity, intimately gathered, *will* increase friction, but, by God’s grace, the heat produced can be healing.

Industrialization has caused most men to leave the refining fire of the home. As fathers have left the shared educational and productive space of the household, mothers have increasingly followed fathers out of the home. Both inside and outside of the household of God, we have reduced both men and women into generic roles divorced from any distinctly fatherly or motherly responsibilities. What’s more, as we all leave the household, even the categories of mother and woman are being erased.

After first tracing a broad history of the separation of the family in our industrial and post-industrial age, I will then overlay various secular attempts at healing the separation. This is my appeal to our post-industrial age – fathers must, increasingly over time, be re-integrated back into their homes, reclaiming their fatherly duty to their wife and offspring. They are not called back into the home to rule like a Gentile. Fathers are called to rule like our crucified King, tenderly caring for their bride, changing diapers, getting on the floor and playing with their kids, and sharing the burdens of education and industry with their wise queen by their side.

This re-integration of fathers back into the life of individual households must be modeled within the practices and structure of the household of God. The Church must question every artificial industrial division. Priests must reclaim their priestly duty as father. They must come alongside mothers within the church, get on their knees, and reclaim their responsibility to catechize and socialize offspring within the inter-generational household of God. Father-priests must model this cruciform Christian rule for every father in the Church. The “high, hard, lovely, and adventurous art of really creating the Christian family” is our post-industrial opportunity.¹⁶ The way forward is *more* intimate and *far more* difficult, but this narrow way back home is the only place to heal our divisions.

More than any other generation, we all have potential for more margin – more time and energy to invest in the intimate space of the home. With ever more repentance and patience, we can heal the divisions between men and women over time, not by *leaving* but by *returning* to the gathered, inter-generational and intimate household of God, fathers and mothers re-claiming and sharing again the tasks of education and industry, together, for the reproduction and flourishing of countless offspring in Christ.

¹⁶ C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, p. 286.

A Brief History of Separation

When Christopher Columbus came to America in the late 1400s, there were already hundreds of indigenous societies spread throughout the land.¹⁷ It wasn't until the early 1600s that England truly set its sights on the New World. Over the course of 300 years, European settlers embarked upon the slow, perilous journey across the Atlantic with hope for the future. Wooden ships, powered by currents above and below, took months to make the dangerous transatlantic trip. By the end of the nineteenth century, wooden hulled ships would become iron hulls and finally steel. What was once a wind-powered journey that would have taken months could now be completed in just ten days. By the 1890s, steam-powered steel ships blazed countless trails across an ocean of opportunity, opportunity forged in the fires of (father and sons) Pennsylvania steelworkers, fires powered by Appalachian coal, dug out of the earth by black and white coal families, who together mined the depths, wearing a sooty black-face mask of oppression, constantly re-settling throughout the hills and hollers to chase a subsistence paycheck.¹⁸

Many brave pioneer families walked across the vast heartland at the offer of free farmland. Just as American industrialization rapidly sped up the westward move from the island of Great Britain, wood and steel and coal would transform the westward move across central America. Transcontinental railroads built throughout the nineteenth century rapidly increased the population of America. Railroad tracks made by families cutting timber, digging coal, and forging steel, would lead to cities scattered throughout the American countryside. At great cost, rapid industrialization fueled more and more industry.

In 1790, 90 percent of Americans lived in households who farmed 8-14 hours a day, six (often seven) days a week. Mothers and fathers, daughters and sons once worked together in the home. Industrialization changed economies throughout the nineteenth century, and households changed too. By 1840, only 70 percent of Americans worked on farms; by 1900, that number dropped to 40 percent; and today, only 1 to 2 percent of Americans work the vast farmlands throughout our

¹⁷ Let me state the obvious: there are countless ways to tell the story of "American History." My aim is not to tell a comprehensive history of American settlement, wars, politics, or even industrialization. Neither do I want to tell a simplistic history. The scope of this history will be simple. It will relate primarily to telling how we arrived at the household structures that we all inhabit today. For example, some might contend that I am softening the history of colonialism, racism, and ethnic tensions historically and presently. That is not my intention. Although I would contend that most everything I will survey affects us all, I am not trying to "white-wash" American history. Statistical gaps related to family dynamics and structure largely disappear between different ethnic and racial groups in present-day America when you compare people of the same economic level (cf Mintz & Kellogg, *Ibid.*, p. 341; see also Anthony B. Bradley, *Ending Overcriminalization and Mass Incarceration: Hope from Civil Society*). There is at present a lot of energy expended in dogmatically deconstructing world and American history. Indeed, the work of "de-colonizing" history is the central aim of much of what passes as historical education today. In any case, if you desire a one-stop (if there is such a thing) trustworthy, contemporary overview of American history that is sensitive to many of these concerns but doesn't fall into the acidic traps of our age, I commend to you Thomas S. Kidd's two volume history published by BH Publishing Group in 2019 (Thomas S. Kidd, *American History, Volume I & II*).

¹⁸ Kidd, *American History, Vol II*, p. 31. Mintz & Kellogg, *Ibid.*, p. 162-166.

land.¹⁹ Whether on the farm or in the factory, families still worked together.²⁰ Working class women and children were forced into industrial labor that offered “poor wages and reprehensible working conditions, and ultimately disrupting family life among the working class.”²¹ It was becoming increasingly clear: the industrial *oikonomia* was no place for children.

As late as 1870, less than three in ten Americans lived in towns of more than 2,500.²² Just as the settling of America exponentially increased because of industrialization, American households quickly became less rural and more urban from 1860 to 1920. “On the eve of the Civil War, only about one-sixth of Americans lived in towns of 8,000 people or more. By 1920, half of all Americans lived in towns that size. In tandem with the closing of the frontier, America was also transforming from a rural, agrarian, farming nation to one of cities, businesses, and factories.”²³ Even as American families increasingly came together in cities, households were increasingly separated and isolated.

Throughout the nineteenth century, migration to urban areas, with the countless transitions to various urban-industrial economies, tested family cohesion. Perhaps counterintuitively, for a few decades in the 1800s, urbanization actually increased familial ties. Vast numbers of immigrants communities – Dutch, Scottish, Irish, German, among others – worked together in close-knit communities that populated the rapidly expanding American cities. In the face of dynamically changing industrial economies, kinship bonds grew throughout the nineteenth century.²⁴ That cohesion would begin to change in the twentieth century.

Twentieth Century Separations

At the turn of the twentieth century, individual households increasingly began to separate. Apprenticeships began to disappear, technological advancements quickly transformed the farm economy, teenagers no longer worked alongside fathers in factories, and even if you managed to escape all of that, the Great Depression and two world wars disrupted every household.²⁵

Although factory labor conditions at the turn of the century had improved in some places, industrial work was not for the faint of heart. The early 1900s brought about necessary child labor laws, secondary schools were built at a breakneck pace, and the passage of compulsory attendance laws increasingly filled the seats. Secondary school attendance outside of the home increased from 10 percent of “teenagers” in 1890, to more than 50 percent in 1930, to over 75

¹⁹ Ben Sasse, *The Vanishing American Adult: Our Coming-of-Age Crisis and How to Rebuild a Culture of Self-Reliance*, p. 34-35.

²⁰ Mintz & Kellogg, *Ibid.*, p. 166.

²¹ Erika Bachiochi, *The Rights of Women: Reclaiming a Lost Vision*, p. 186.

²² Mintz & Kellogg, *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²³ Kidd, *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁴ Mintz & Kellogg, *Ibid.*, p. 152.

²⁵ Sasse, *Ibid.*, p. 35.

percent in 1945. In the timeline of human history, the separation of both education and work (industry and production) from the household happened almost overnight.²⁶ Fathers left home to go to work, increasingly without their children. More and more, and for many good reasons, mothers left too.²⁷

Industrialization was hard on households. How could we heal the divisions? Twentieth century answers to industrial separations did not come out of nowhere. Over one hundred years before the waves of feminism crashed upon American shores, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote in her 1792 book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*,

“Most prospects in life are marred by the shuffling worldly wisdom of men, who, forgetting that they cannot serve God and mammon, endeavour to blend contradictory things. If you wish to make your son rich, pursue one course—if you are only anxious to make him virtuous, you must take another; but do not imagine that you can bound from one road to the other without losing your way.”²⁸

In an 1891 papal encyclical, Pope Leo XIII called for economic justice, a justice “more imperious and ancient than any bargain between man and man, namely, that wages ought not to be insufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved wage-earner [and his family.]”²⁹ In various ways, the twentieth century would be a hundred years of bargains, feeble attempts to heal the family.

Feminisms and Secular Responses

Families today enjoy so many gifts and graces of industrial and technological innovation. Food scarcity is nearly history, medical technology heals daily, and a diverse worldwide economy has led to better outcomes globally.³⁰ Within homes, heart-wrenching rates of both infant mortality (as late as the 1940s) and orphans are largely a thing of the past. Yet, “today’s families are more isolated than their predecessors from the worlds of work, kinship, and community life,” and this separation has led to more depression, dissatisfaction, and division within households than ever before.³¹ We have more years, but less life.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34-37.

²⁷ I cannot even begin to summarize the effects of two world wars on the increased separation of twentieth century households. Industrialization made World War I possible, and atheistic, secular eugenic philosophy, along with increased worldwide industrialization and technological innovation, led to World War II. The industrial might of America changed the course of world history in the second world war (for example, Americans produced warships 20 to 1 over the Japanese), to say nothing of what these wars did to transform the norms of men and women in the workforce. Alas, even as I paint with broad brushstrokes, this paper is mostly concerned with history from below, not from above.

²⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 171. Scribd, <https://www.scribd.com/book/351498802>

²⁹ Bachiochi, *Ibid.*, p. 189.

³⁰ cf Rosling, *Ibid.*

³¹ Mintz & Kellogg, *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Even as we have become increasingly separated from our homes, we put more and more of our emotional, psychological, and personal well-being upon our home life, our children, and our marriages. We have been catechized with Disney princess stories, romance novels, and underneath it all, the myth of the “soul mate” who can fulfill every filial and spousal longing that we can imagine.³² In the face of all that pressure, both because of our modern turn towards the self³³ and industrial separations, women have increasingly, and understandably, rebelled against isolation in the home.

“The Industrial Revolution... reconstituted the United States from an agrarian to a commercial economy, radically altering the world of work from rural family farms, artisan workshops, and trade guilds to city factories and coal mines. [Once] interdependent couples now experienced an altogether new asymmetrical dependency relationship of homebound wives upon wageearning husbands.”³⁴

There are many ways to tell the story of twentieth century attempts to heal the existential crises of our crumbling homes. Erika Bachiochi’s recent book, *The Rights of Women*, is certainly a more comprehensive history of feminism in America, especially as that history relates to legal struggles. But for brevity and clarity, we’ll let Abigail Favale’s book, *The Genesis of Gender*, be our guide.

“Feminism as a term first began to circulate in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, making its way across the Atlantic by 1910.”³⁵ Once an ardent feminist scholar, now a converted Catholic, Favale outlines the history, not of feminism, but of various twentieth century “feminisms” that have attempted to heal the separations within households after generations of industrialization.³⁶

The First Wave – European feminism transformed in America, taking upon the character of the nineteenth century abolitionist movement. As men increasingly left the home in the early 1900s and no longer engaged in meaningful dialog with women, women were increasingly ostracized

³² Grant, *Ibid.*, p. 37-39. Furthermore, the longing for spousal satisfaction, argues John Paul II, is good and given to us by our good God. This is the “spousal meaning of the body,” and JP II persuasively argues that the separation of the masculine and the feminine, and our deep desire for spousal satisfaction, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, can only be fully satisfied in Christ – He is the husband who alone can redeem his Bride. “While the analogy used in Ephesians clarifies the mystery of the relationship between the Christ and the Church, at the same time it reveals the essential truth about marriage, namely, that marriage corresponds to the vocation of Christians only when it mirrors the love that Christ, the Bridegroom, gives to the Church, his Bride, and which the Church (in likeness to the wife who is “subject,” and thus completely given) seeks to give back to Christ in return.” (John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, Location 8706 of 16464, Kindle.)

³³ Many arguments for the destruction of both femininity and masculinity in our day are rooted in the philosophical turn to the individual as the arbiter of all meaning. See especially, Favale, *Ibid.* & Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*.

³⁴ Bachiochi, *Ibid.*, p. 180.

³⁵ Favale, *Ibid.*, p. 56.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 53-83. Favale does not point specifically to the effects of industrialization upon households and women as the cause of the many “waves” of feminism – that is my argument.

from having any political or economic voice. First wave feminism, sometimes called the women's suffrage movement, was the first attempt to heal the separation caused by industrialization.

Among countless others coming out of the "Gilded Age" of the late nineteenth century, daughter of a fifteen term Republican congressman, Florence Kelley, in her 1905 book, *Some Ethical Gains through Legislation*, wrote against such "tyranny of wealth." The "social claims" of industrialization were dominating the "family claim," especially among the poor and working class – market forces crushed homes. Until her death in 1932, alongside many brave women, Kelley wrote and continued to advocate persuasively for legal protections, for a "just family." The unjust demands of industrialization were deleterious for "the care and nurture of [childhood]... a vital concern of the nation."³⁷

"In the apt words of a southern academic at the time: "[Strict equality feminists] would free women from the rule of men only to make them greater slaves to the machines of industry." At a time when motherhood was still regarded as the highest of callings, and the central importance of family life still dominated the imaginations of most Americans, such an exchange hardly appeared as an advance for ordinary women."³⁸

In many ways, the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920 effectively ended this first wave.³⁹ It would take at least another thirty years for the second wave to crest.

The Second Wave – During World War II, as more and more men went off to war, many women entered into the factory jobs they left behind. After generations of separation, leaving their feminine gifts for productivity and industry largely unused and unappreciated within homes – again, homes that had long ceased to be places of education, industry, and commerce – women returned to work, and they couldn't go back.⁴⁰ This wartime female independence led to many outcomes⁴¹, not least of which, the second wave of feminism in the late 1960s.

In her massively popular 1963 book, *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan exposed the myth of the perfect 1950s housewife. The separation of women into "listless" domestic roles in the home was exposed. This glossy advertising image of the family – men at work, children at school, and now, assisted by countless gadgets and gizmos, women at home, left to dust, cook, and clean, in appliance-filled homes.

³⁷ Bachiochi, *Ibid.*, p. 189.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

³⁹ This is an unbelievably simplistic account of all of the real gains wrought by the suffragettes. See especially chapters 4 and 5 in Bachiochi, *Ibid.*, p. 136-212.

⁴⁰ See especially, Mintz & Kellogg's chapter, "Families on the Home Front," *Ibid.*, p. 250-286.

⁴¹ For example, the post-war decades saw significant increases in infidelity. This is not to say that the independence of women *caused* a rise in infidelity, but increasing separation from the home, for both men and women, led to more and more opportunities for foolishness, for both husbands and wives. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

With most legal battles already won, Friedan's work inspired a generation of women to effect social and political change. As with previous generations, confined to increasingly quiet homes, second wave feminists largely looked outside the home for answers. Unlike first wave feminists, the second wave quickly turned to "reproductive freedom" as the answer. The "male-led National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Law (NARAL) forged an alliance with the newly formed National Organization for Women (NOW)" to, in the words of one feminist of this generation, "hijack the women's movement" – abortion was now the "central and immovable plank of the mainstream feminist platform."⁴²

Recent Waves – The "sex wars" of the 1980s began a separation within feminism that has only further intensified today. Sexuality was becoming the center of what it meant to be a person. No longer free to be a "reproductive" self, now sexual intercourse was free from reproduction entirely. "Sex-positive" feminists extolled the "freedom" that pornography and prostitution gave women – free to industriously use their own body for pleasure and financial gain as they saw fit.⁴³

Thus, consent⁴⁴ has become the only category for whether or not a sexual act is permissible. No longer even aberrant⁴⁵, fantasies of physical dominance and sadomasochism are mainstream. Following the writings of Judith Butler, feminism has explicitly ceased to be about women at all. Women have justifiably left the barren homes that a market-driven economy has left behind, and now, as they go out, women are instructed to become more assertive, appear more masculine, and claim every role in an unceasing battle for equality.⁴⁶

The last one hundred years of feminist thought has problematized femininity itself – being female is the problem – thus, the biological reality of female as distinct from male is denied. Being a "woman" is no longer even an option. All distinction has been erased, not only in dress, or appearance, or roles, or language, but in the human body itself. Eliminating all categories, first

⁴² Favale, *Ibid.*, p. 58-59.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴⁴ I recently did a required training for coaching recreational U-12 YMCA youth soccer, which graphically described multiple cases of illicit sex acts between opposite-sex and same-sex persons, and the only criteria by which the acts were judged to be acceptable or not was *consent*. God is not to be mocked. We appropriate this framework to our peril.

⁴⁵ Indeed, no longer even *abhorrent*!

⁴⁶ Let me encourage you to not check out for saying something like "dress distinctions are not meaningless." I will propose below that we should fully support a biblically and historically informed interrogation of every supposedly conservative feminine stereotype. I am not saying that women should all wear dresses. But what we wear is not meaningless. Blurring outward dress distinctions is a sign of blurring other lines. But 1950s, already-industrialized, and dichotomous divisions between the man-as-breadwinner and the woman-as-homemaker caricatures should be called out too.

through language and then through power systems, is the explicitly stated goal of feminism today.⁴⁷ Now required reading in most universities, *Undoing Gender*, Judith Butler writes,

“How do drag, butch, femme, transgender, transexual persons enter the political field? They make us not only question what is real, and what ‘must’ be, but they also show us how the norms that govern contemporary notions of reality can be questioned and how new modes of reality can become instituted.”⁴⁸

The feminism of women such as Ruth Bader Ginsburg or J. K. Rowling has been deconstructed into #MeToo and #BelieveAllWomen. At the start of these social (media) trends, second and early third wave feminists reflexively adopted these deconstructing hashtags. “If third-wave feminism had a rebellious, libertarian, anticensorship vibe, fourth-wave feminists at times veer in the opposite direction, policing and prescribing codes of behavior and speech designed to reflect the latest gender trends.”⁴⁹ A fundamental shift has occurred.

Favale convincingly argues throughout her book that gender chaos was always the goal. The logical end of generations of problematizing female reproduction has succeeded. We not only celebrate the murder of unborn children, any givenness related to any human body is gone – born or unborn – bodies have no intrinsic value. Long gone are the days that there is any God-given human nature. Today, children are taught in grade schools across America that they were born with no real biological human nature. Individual choice is now defined as the acceptability of mutilation-as-creativity, freedom means unrestrained decision by an individual, and the category of woman has been consumed by gender as a “socially compelled performance.”⁵⁰

There is a common thread through every wave of twentieth century feminism – every attempt to heal the separations caused by industrialization has happened outside of the home. Women were confined to simplified categories of domesticity, so it is no wonder that they rejected the received, historically-novel industrial dichotomies between men and women, fighting for a voice and a place in the wider economies of society. But each broad outside-the-home social response has not healed the division. If anything, our wounds are now deeper. So we turned outside again, this time to the state for help.

Legislative Responses – As already outlined above, industrialization forced most men (and many working class women) to work outside of the home, thus the education of children was increasingly outsourced to the state. In 1961, the American federal government had 45 domestic social programs. By 1969, that number had climbed to 435.⁵¹ Men, and now women, had both left the home. It was then the state’s exclusive responsibility to nurture, educate, employ, and house all the scattered souls – children, women, and men – all orphaned from the home in our

⁴⁷ This is why “women’s studies” are increasingly changing to “gender studies.”

⁴⁸ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 29. Quoted from Favale, *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁵¹ Mintz & Kellogg, *Ibid.*, p. 342.

market-driven economy. Every movement away from the household could not heal, and very often, only further intensified the family-destabilizing tyranny of industrialization. The separation was now complete.

As Gross Domestic Profit continues to increase year over year, medical technology numbs more and more pain, and technological assistance has turned into artificial intelligence – “the good life” has been replaced by “an easy life.” Every soul neatly categorized into industrial slots, units controlled by the collective. The “freedoms” produced by industrialization – greater wealth, economic mobility (for some), and liberty from the constraints of household and familial obligations – these have not led to anything other than more sorrow.

Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg, upon her nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1993, quoted Judge Learned Hand’s 1944 speech about freedom. Hand wrote,

“What is this liberty which must lie in the hearts of men and women? It is not the ruthless, the unbridled will; it is not freedom to do as one likes. That is the denial of liberty, and leads straight to its overthrow. A society in which men recognize no check upon their freedom soon becomes a society where freedom is the possession of only a savage few — as we have learned to our sorrow.”⁵²

As our society descends into unchecked savagery, further confined by the “liberty” wrought by industrialization, technology, and greater wealth, how can we begin to heal the mutilation of both masculinity and femininity that is now characteristic of our post-industrial age?⁵³

The Home and The Household

If the plot of industrialization was that first fathers left, and then children and women left too, then the plot for the post-industrial age must begin with fathers. Fathers must come back to their individual home. More and more in our post-industrial economy, their will be opportunities for commerce and production to be re-centered within the household.

Even if a return to the household as the center of education, industry, and commerce takes generations, fathers, and then mothers, can take real, tangible steps daily to come home and be present. Every time mothers and fathers, especially, come home and make the choice to be creative instead of consumptive, to be industrious together instead of entertained alone, or to

⁵² Bachiochi, *Ibid.*, p. 385.

⁵³ As it happens when writing research papers, you continue to chase footnotes, and near the end of your writing you inevitably find a resource that deserves to be integrated into your entire paper. At the eleventh hour, I stumbled upon an excellent resource that dovetails quite nicely with my thesis, Erika Bachiochi’s 2021 book *The Rights of Women: Reclaiming a Lost Vision*, published by Notre Dame University Press. I have attempted to integrate her insightful analysis at several points along the way, but I have not done her book justice. But I am thankful that I found a wonderful voice which harmonizes with much of what I propose below. Her concluding chapter, “Reimagining Feminism Today in Search of Human Excellence,” p. 385ff. Even as Bachiochi calls fathers and mothers back into the home, her work is primarily focused upon outward focused, social and legislative actions that encourage this return to the home (and to value both the domestic duties of mothers and fathers). Her exhortations compliment my appeal to return to a de-industrialized household of God. Christians who are involved in local organizations and government, statewide initiatives, and federal government would do well to enact her proposals (p. 393-420).

slow down and speak and play with our children instead of shirking our responsibilities to one another in the household, we begin to heal the separations.

This move into the intimate space of the home will be much harder than our safe, controlled, post-industrial work environments. We will be less productive, but only if financial profit or ministry-growth timelines are our only metrics. Writing a research paper in my home office alongside my children is harder. Children not only interrupt my “productivity,” but they still require my active engagement. I still believe the failed twentieth century promises that we can only find true flourishing outside the home, as if growth-at-all-cost has ever worked.

Mothers were never meant to bear the weight of “parenting” alone. Most often, Holy Scripture speaks of fathers and mothers, not the sex-neutral parent. It is true that both mothers and fathers share many common parental tasks. Still, we must reclaim our *unique* motherly and fatherly voices in the home – each to educate children, each deepening in our knowledge of one another, daily practicing habits of repentance and forgiveness face-to-face, catechizing and socializing offspring, and sharing together in the overlapping spheres of industry and production as a household. Some forms of household industriousness will be valued monetarily by society, some will not. Every home will strike a different balance, and that balance will dynamically change in different seasons of life. No matter how we share this responsibility, either way, it is ours.

The Family-Supporting Community

In our technologically “connected” world, households have become “more private,” a “specialized unit” that is cut off from others. Even in rural communities like West Virginia, we are “more isolated” from “work, kinship, and community life,” and this “structural isolation” has made us all, both individually and collectively, more fragile.⁵⁴

When both fathers and mothers return home, Erika Bachiochi highlights our need for local, “family-supporting communities” as necessary to the flourishing of individual households. Indeed, many of our individual households have generations of dysfunction that will require communal support. She writes,

“If much historical injustice and prejudice against women has been corrected in our time,⁵⁵ the culturally essential work of families and *family-supporting communities*—practiced and handed down over the ages—has been sorely neglected. Without a substantive account of human freedom, and its proper end, human excellence, the essential human goods of children, family, and community, so necessary for authentic human flourishing, are subordinated to the dominant value of choice dictated by the logic of the market. We’re left with a culture that aggrandizes consumerism, workaholism, and the relentless quest for power, wealth, and pleasure. And though this new American way of life may appear to benefit the rich, well-educated, and otherwise privileged, none of this bodes well for children and other vulnerable populations.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Mintz & Kellogg, *Ibid.*, p. 20-23.

⁵⁵ That's a big “if!” Many legal inequalities have been corrected, but she is right to highlight a vast social need.

⁵⁶ Bachiochi, *Ibid.*, p. 390, emphasis added.

The neglected “family-supporting community” that we need in our post-industrial age is the household of God, but not the separated and industrialized churches of the twentieth century, massive structures crumbling throughout our nation. We need a church that honors the distinct gifts of both fathers and mothers in the faith, who model inter-generational involvement and catechesis, questioning all of our received industrial divisions within the practices and structure of *the* “family-supporting community.” At the head of the household, we need Christian priests as fathers to return to being faithfully present within the home.

More than “assembly” or “church” (*ekklesia*), “house” or “household” (*oikos*) is the most common word used for the Church in Holy Scripture. More than simply an organized gathering or group of people, the Church is a blood-bought family, the household of God. In every generation, we are called to recenter and reorder our lives, both our own households and every other mediating institution we are apart of, underneath the economy (*oikonomia*, “household management”) of God.

Every time we welcome a child into the Church through Holy Baptism, we ask this question, “Will you who witness these [baptismal] vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?” How does the Church answer?

More than “it takes a village,” we are all adopted into a new family, the kingdom of God, the household of the Church. Mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, married and single, all children born not of the flesh but through the water and by the Spirit. As we are born into this eternal household, just as we must have fathers and mothers to generate new *bios*, physical children, we must have spiritual fathers and mothers present within the household of the Church to generate new *zoe*, spiritual children in Christ. John Paul II calls this generative work a gradual, “continuous, permanent conversion” that “is brought about concretely” through the embodied presence of fathers and mothers with their children within the household of God.⁵⁷

A Fellowship of Differents

In twenty-first century society, if we organize at all, increasingly, we organize into homogenous categories. The elimination of distinctions and the grouping of persons according sameness is apparent not only among critical gender theorists. Even as we add infinite options to census forms – black, white, conservative, liberal, gay, Republican, transsexual, gender, bigender, nonbinary, cisgender, trigender, demigender, semifluid, demiflux, pangender – the more we self-define, the more we’re all the same, and the more we sharply divide into collective spaces characterized by sameness. Our industrially-separated culture looks to eliminate distinction and bring us back together in groups of sameness outside the home. We don’t need sameness, we need oneness. And re-centering the language of household and family in the Church is important for this reason.

“How true membership in [the Church] differs from inclusion in a collective may be seen in the structure of a *family*. The grandfather, the parents, the grown-up son, the child, the dog, and the cat are true members (in the organic sense), precisely because they are not members or units of a homogeneous class. They are not interchangeable. Each person is almost a species in himself. The

⁵⁷ JP II, *Ibid.*, p. 7.

mother is not simply a different person from the daughter; she is a different kind of person. The grown-up brother is not simply one unit in the class children; he is a separate estate of the realm. The father and grandfather are almost as different as the cat and the dog. If you subtract any one member, you have not simply reduced the family in number; *you have inflicted an injury on its structure*. Its unity is a unity of unlikes, almost of incommensurables.”⁵⁸

The church is not a collective, we are not all the same. A family is not egalitarian, we each embody different interconnected roles. We do not all have equal rights to every privilege, every obligation, every role, or every action. The household of God is a family, unified as one but not the same – it is necessarily a “fellowship of different.”⁵⁹ And within our industrialized, separated churches in America, there are deep father wounds that the Church must address. The household of God desperately needs priests as fathers to be present in the home.

Irreplaceable Fathers

The absence of fathers is felt in every age. Even with a lot of oft-repeated, poor data circulating online⁶⁰, there is no arguing that our entire society is reeling from absentee fathers.⁶¹ This is perhaps the greatest wound caused by our market-driven industrial separations. Boys and girls need a present dad – a speaking, hugging, shaping, loving, worshipping, and guarding father.

Among many other things, boys (and girls⁶²) need fathers to speak and to wrestle. Indeed, boys must live “hard” to be “happy.” In my home, we take seriously Charles Taylor’s diagnosis of the “atrophy of the martial virtues” in our little society.⁶³ Boys need to read books like *Prince Caspian* and *The Green Ember* to become “knightly,” they must do physical labor, they must toil, and they must experience victory and defeat.⁶⁴ Boys must learn from their father the difference

⁵⁸ C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, p. 164-166, emphasis added.

⁵⁹ Scot McKnight, *A Fellowship of Differents*.

⁶⁰ I’m referring specifically to a statistic cited on countless websites about church attendance. See <https://www.missionalliance.org/the-myth-of-the-93-fathers-and-mothers-are-not-a-competitive-hierarchy-in-the-home/>

⁶¹ See especially Warren Farrell, *The Boy Crisis: Why Our Boys Are Struggling and What We Can Do about It*. Farrell summarizes a massive amount of incontrovertible data and the outcomes that follow the data related to the absence of fathers.

⁶² See especially Michael Ward’s summary of the martial virtues in C. S. Lewis’ corpus, in *Planet Narnia*, p. 87-99. Many of these martial lessons apply to female characters too. Jane Studdock, Lucy and Susan Pevensie, and, perhaps the greatest heroine in all of literature, Tolkien’s Éowyn embodies the need for women to be strong too. Women have stepped into martial roles in Holy Scripture, history, and literature, *but* martial virtues are not feminine, and they should *never* be normative for women in any healthy society. See especially Rebecca McLaughlin’s fantastic chapter on boys and girls in *10 Questions Every Teen Should Ask (and Answer) about Christianity*, p. 133-152.

⁶³ “Ouch!” Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 494.

⁶⁴ C. S. Lewis, *Prince Caspian*. S. D. Smith, *The Green Ember*.

between the field of battle and the king's court, when to exercise fierce masculinity, and when to employ the most tender care.⁶⁵

My sons (and my feisty daughter) have the right to wrestle and punch me a lot. But they have no such right to hit their mom or their sister. They have permission to wrestle with one another. But my eldest son must not hit his little brother in the same way that he hits dad. This must be taught and practiced. Girls are not boys. Little brothers are different than dads. Fathers and mothers are essential in modeling this differentiation. This kind of embodied fatherly presence is desperately needed, not only for the fatherless in our midst, but a father who is present is the heart cry of every child in the household.

This is not to say that fathers and boys are to be caricatures of masculinity, typified by the bravado of MMA-exalting, megachurch pastors. We don't necessarily need more separated mens retreats and sexual purity challenges. We need fathers faithfully present with children, in the Church, both gathered in homes and in the household of God altogether.

“...the single best response to the sexual asymmetries in both human reproduction and caregiving is *an emotionally engaged and deeply attentive fatherhood*. Such a fatherhood is, most essentially, one in which men who sire children recognize the distinctive and irreplaceable bonds they enjoy with them. But even more than that, it is the embrace of fatherhood as a core, constitutive, primary identity for men with children, one that prioritizes the collaborative, character-shaping, solidarity-building work of the home and deeply respects the distinctive burdens women experience in childbearing and child-rearing, just as good men in generations past and present have always done.”⁶⁶

The Church must be an undivided household that safely embraces and comes alongside fatherless households broken by industrial division, patiently teaching, modeling, and catechizing both fathers and mothers in the hard work of truly living in the home. Increasingly over time, we must question every artificial industrial division within the household of God. Fathers, yes including rectors⁶⁷, and mothers must share the work of catechesis. There should be many inter-generational, liturgical and spontaneous spaces within the life of the Church, where fathers can be present with the entire household – yes, even to get on the ground and wrestle. Speak. Wrestle. Show affection. Protect. Embrace. Repeat.

“Mothers and fathers, especially, need communities to help them form their children in the virtues they need to use their freedom responsibly, and to offer families assistance and encouragement when time or money is tight, or marital or parental difficulties arise. Successful individuals from humble

⁶⁵ See especially C. S. Lewis' essay, “The Necessity of Chivalry,” in *Present Concerns*, p. 13-16.

⁶⁶ Bachiochi, *Ibid.*, p. 403, emphasis added.

⁶⁷ The first rubric for the catechesis of children in 1662 Book of Common Prayer is given to “the pastor of every parish.” This instruction is given to rectors in a pre-industrial, largely agrarian economy, with most family members working 70-80 hours per week on the farm. We need not be simplistic in applying such admonitions to our day. Nonetheless, children need the voices of both father and mother. The Christian priest is first and foremost a father, and his children desperately need to hear his voice.

origins consistently relay with gratitude the ways in which broader communities shored up support for their families and challenged them as persons.”⁶⁸

This is not an industrial competition between churches, or schools, or para-church ministries. We need more mediating institutions, not less, to support families.⁶⁹ However, the Church must lead. Only the household of God can truly contain all the broken. Fathers, and especially priests, must come alongside mothers in the church and reclaim their responsibility to catechize and socialize offspring within the inter-generational household of God.

A Pre-Industrial Imagination for a Post-Christian Age

Even after the embarrassment of the American Revolution, the “imperial pomp” of Britain still dominated a rapidly industrializing world economy. In the middle of the nineteenth century, England’s “Crystal Palace” stood as the pinnacle of man’s mastery over nature. This monumental cast-iron and glass altar to human innovation was the gathering place for the first World’s Fair of 1851.

Underneath all of the gloss, the dark underbelly of worldwide industrialization was the lived experience of more and more families. Blast furnaces and the plumes of textile plants scattered throughout the English countryside transformed the Shire of places like Hull City into Mordor.⁷⁰ Unimaginable at the turn of the twentieth century, worldwide unity and progress, built upon the sand of industrialization, came crumbling down into the trenches of World War I. It was out of this darkness that the first embers of hope shone.

There are many reasons why J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis have long captivated the minds of moderns, both young and old. In 1914, both Tolkien and Lewis were thrust into the trench warfare of an industrially-horrific world war. On the other side of the Great War, and against the pessimistic, eugenic spirit of the age, both men were captivated and nourished by a pre-industrial world, alive with beauty, imagination, and hope. They were old souls following an ancient path.⁷¹

The Sermon and the Lunch

Every year I encounter more and more contenders for the title of “Best C.S. Lewis Essay,” but for my money, Lewis’ classic essay, “The Sermon and the Lunch,” is still on the throne.⁷² His essay begins with this rather hilarious story.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 418

⁶⁹ cf Sasse, *Them*.

⁷⁰ Joseph Loconte, *A Hobbit, a Wardrobe, and a Great War: How J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis Rediscovered Faith, Friendship, and Heroism in the Cataclysm of 1914-18*, p. 21-32.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* See also, Michael Ward, *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis*, and, “Peak Middle-earth: Why Mount Doom is not the Climax of The Lord of the Rings,” <https://anunexpectedjournal.com/peak-middle-earth-why-mount-doom-is-not-the-climax-of-the-lord-of-the-rings/>. C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image*.

⁷² C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, p. 282-286.

“‘And so’, said the preacher, ‘The home must be the foundation of our national life. It is there, all said and done, that character is formed. It is there that we appear as we really are. It is there we can fling aside the weary disguises of the outer world and be ourselves. It is there that we retreat from the noise and stress and temptation and dissipation of daily life to seek the sources of fresh strength and renewed purity...’ And as he spoke I noticed that all confidence in him had departed from every member of that congregation who was under thirty. They had been listening well up to this point. Now the shufflings and coughings began. Pews creaked; muscles relaxed. The sermon, for all practical purposes, was over; the five minutes for which the preacher continued talking were a total waste of time—at least for most of us.”

The story only gets better.

After church, Lewis is invited over to the vicar’s home for lunch. The vicar’s wife, along with his two adult children who are visiting home for the day, join them for lunch. The lunchtime behavior that he describes would perhaps best describe a lunchtime of parents with toddlers, yet everyone at the table is an adult.

Clearly, the vicar’s *real* home life does not match with his sermon. The vicar does not practice what he preaches, but that’s not, for Lewis, the main issue, for only a “fool would discount a doctor’s warnings about alcoholic poisoning because the doctor himself drank too much.” Rather, Lewis’ main concern is that the vicar is not *telling the truth* about how difficult living in a home truly is. “The trouble is not that he is insincere but that he is a fool.”

“He is not talking from his own experience of family life at all: he is automatically reproducing a sentimental tradition—and it happens to be a false tradition. That is why the congregation have stopped listening to him.”

On one level, Lewis agreed with the vicar’s sermon. “The home must be the foundation for our life.” Indeed, the point of Lewis’ essay was to “recall Christian people to domesticity,” but the only way to do that would be to first “stop telling lies about home life and to substitute realistic teaching.”

Going home (and being fully present) is hard. Exercising patience with children, living with your wife in an understanding way, staring your inadequacies and sins in the face with every bungled intimate interaction – householding is hard. It is no surprise that both fathers and mothers have not only left home, they wanted to leave. In the short term, this is way easier. In the long run, and certainly on a relational and spiritual level, our distance from one another sows a lot of outcomes that we do not want to reap. We give all our energy to market-driven pursuits out there – no wonder we want to come home and check out.

The great shame is that this lack of fatherly presence is perhaps most apparent in the household of God and in priestly households. Our churches are no longer shaped like a cross, they look like convention centers, divided, targeted spaces for consumption. At home and in the household of God, priests make less and less time to be present with their messy, intergenerational, diverse family.

How can we, post-industrial consumers, return to what Lewis called the “high, hard, lovely, and adventurous art of really creating the Christian family”? We need a plan, we need some ground

rules. Where does Lewis turn first to establish a “*regula*”, a rule of life for the home? He turned to monasticism.

Monastic Wisdom for Priest-Fathers⁷³

After Constantine, the priesthood was becoming increasingly watered down by public esteem. In the late fourth century, John Chrysostom lamented the “stupidity” and the swagger of councils that ordained men to the office of the priesthood because of “distinguished family” rather than “piety.”⁷⁴ Thus, he called for priests to come from monastic communities. Chrysostom acknowledged that this recruitment strategy had its pitfalls. The single monk, like a captain of a ship at harbor, had not been tested in the “stormy sea” of a diverse household. Within his ascetic monastic life “he has nothing to goad and excite his soul,” but when he devotes himself to the whole community, most men “fail under test and endure bitter, hard troubles.”⁷⁵ The patriarchs could certainly testify to this familial struggle.

From the start, Chrysostom knew that accepting the call to holy orders meant not only giving an account for his own soul but for all the souls of those in his household. This is why he first avoided priestly ministry in order to remain in isolation as a monk. “For someone who has many faults, but can keep them out of view by living in isolation and disarm them by not associating with anybody, when he returns to social life, will achieve nothing except to become a laughing-stock, and will run worse risks than that.”⁷⁶ He wrote about the incredible challenge of a man leaving a monastic community to enter into priestly ministry, because living in a diverse household is hard. “Making a list of all the difficulties involved is like trying to measure the ocean.”⁷⁷

Two centuries after Chrysostom, St Gregory the Great affirmed and organized his priestly admonitions according to the countless difficulties of living together within a diverse household. With a mastery of figural exegesis, Gregory restated Chrysostom’s call for the necessity of the inner piety of a priest. But with incredibly nuanced pastoral care, Gregory aimed to come alongside former monks, now priests, in their oversight of the diverse household of God. Maintaining a healthy balance of personal soul care and the care of souls in the church was Gregory’s aim.

⁷³ For the entirety of church history, writings on the priesthood assume the paternal character the office, not only in teaching and exposition of Holy Scripture, but in the very nature of writing about the masculine, warfare virtues necessary to execute the duties of this office. Again, this strength, this masculine character required of the office is not a caricature. St. Augustine points to St. Josephs fatherly protection of Jesus as being authoritative, affectionate, and faithful. Donald H. Calloway, MIC, *Consecration to St. Joseph: The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father*, p. 100-101.

⁷⁴ John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood* (Popular Patristics Series), p. 89-93.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.144-146

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

In his great litany for preachers, Gregory guides the rector in navigating no less than 36 differences that require nuanced attention in the Church – from distinctions like “men and women; young and old; poor and rich; joyful and sad; subordinates and leaders;” all the way to “those who boast about their sinful behavior and those who confess their sins but do not put an end to them.”⁷⁸ Like Chrysostom before him, Gregory describes the difficulty of priestly ministry in terms of relational intimacy, not industrial complexity.

John Chrysostom ends his exhortation to priests by considering “the glory of the Bride of Christ, her purity, her spiritual beauty, her wisdom, and her fair demeanor.”⁷⁹ Echoing King Lemuel’s praise for his bride, Chrysostom laments his inadequacy to protect his betrothed, “the daughter of the king.” To be a Christian priest means entering into sleepless spiritual warfare, and the terrain of the battle to guard the King’s daughter is perilous.

“[With] dust blinding the eyes no less than this darkness, the torrents of blood, the groans of those who fall, the battle-cries of those who stand, the heaps of slain, chariot wheels dripping with blood, horses and riders thrown head-long by the multitude of dead bodies, the ground nothing but a sludge of blood and arrows and javelins, horses’ hoofs and human heads lying in heaps, a man’s arm and a chariot wheel, a helmet and a transfixed chest, swords spattered with human brains, and the broken head of an arrow with an eye spitted upon it.”⁸⁰

This is only a small part of Chrysostom’s concluding, manly exhortation to Christian priests. Guarding and protecting the household of God is a sleepless, gruesome, and utterly masculine call. This warfare, so gruesomely described, is an apocalyptic portrayal of the warfare of sinful souls intimately gathered together in the household of God. Fathers must enter again into this intimate warfare. Even as we enter the fray, we must acknowledge that often “the priest’s wounds require greater help, indeed as much as those of all the people together.”⁸¹ Thankfully, our great high priest is with us, daily healing us – we are not alone in his home.

To live in the tight, intimate quarters of a home, with increasing numbers of intergenerational and personality conflict, is hard – it’s hard as hell.

Conclusion

In our godless, post-Christian age, each human person has now assumed the role of the “divine,” and our twofold sacraments of fornication and technology have copulated. Once a place for procreation, now the abandoned home is a place of performative mutilation, “the untried power of [man’s] *technê*” is now unleashed to mutilate our children.⁸² The stakes are higher than ever before.

⁷⁸ St Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule* (Popular Patristics Series), p. 88-89.

⁷⁹ Chrysostom, *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁸² Favale, *Ibid.*, p. 85, (see also p. 165-190).

We have all been born into a world filled with unbelievable gifts, *real progress* – centuries of wise women who made important legislative gains, industrial innovations that have led to tangible good, rapid technological growth that gives us more time and bandwidth at every level of society, miracle-like medical advancements leading to less suffering, and nearly global food security which has led to countless other gifts and graces.⁸³ But even with many statistical reasons to be optimistic, in our age of tender therapeutic rhetoric, the harsh reality of our society is deeper depressions, epidemic rates of isolation, suicide, and drug use, and murderous divisions everywhere.

We live in what sociologists call the “Post-Industrial Age,” which is another way of saying that we don’t really know what age we are in yet. We simply know that we are living after the days of a primarily industrial economy. Whether or not outsourcing industrial production to international partners is in the long term, sustainable, that is not for me to decide and is way beyond the scope of this paper. However, in our new “information economy” there are ample opportunities to establish new norms for the next generation(s) of work.

“...if the Industrial Revolution is the proper cause of today’s sharp cleavage between wage labor and family life, why not insist that today’s technological revolution find ways to reintegrate the same? Just as government supported technology to put a man on the moon, so too should it encourage technological innovations that would better integrate the whole panoply of adult responsibilities—to families, jobs, and the broader community. Indeed, by forcing widespread “social distancing” during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, it inadvertently already has. Though clearly all paid work cannot be done remotely, technology can enable this reintegration to take shape in many sectors, bringing more economically productive work back into the home. Less commuting (by car and plane) would also translate into less tax on the natural environment, and more home-cooked family dinners and other shared labors and traditions, reestablishing that privileged time to instill basic habits of self-mastery and respect for others and domestic affections too. A nation that sought to elevate the “family claim” over the “social claim” would make this more of a priority still.”⁸⁴

Over and over again, our post-industrial, twenty-first century economy has given us many opportunities for new ways of imagining our households to be spaces for both education and industry. It has also revealed that we are largely unprepared psychologically, spiritually, and practically to handle this transition as a whole. Like industrialization, this transition must be gradual, and the Church has a massive opportunity to lead us out of our divided wasteland.

The Missional Household

A single man, the God-Man, Jesus Christ has more offspring than Abraham could have ever imagined. Near the end of his life, he declared divine hospitality to a despised outsider, “I’m going to your house today.” He entered into households, and there, in that hard, lovely, and intimate space, his kingdom was born. A few years later, a married man, Peter, stood to declare Jesus’ message of adoption. Now belonging to a new household, this new diverse family broke

⁸³ cf Hans Rosling, *Factfulness: Ten Reasons We’re Wrong About the World – and Why Things Are Better Than You Think*.

⁸⁴ Bachiochi, *Ibid.*, p, 416-417.

bread in their homes, held everything in common, and received it all with glad and generous hearts.

Another single man, a good and zealous man, Saul of Tarsus was born again into the home of Judas. He was given a new name and then called to enter into countless households just as his Lord did many years ago. It would not be an easy way. Diverse households, intimately gathered, can be overwhelming and challenging, but it is there that the kingdom of God breaks into our separation. “I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”

Paul would later rebuke Peter, “You must gather and eat with all people without distinction!” He wrote to the born again offspring of Abraham in Galatia, those born into this new household, which would no longer be divided into categories of sameness – Jew, Greek, slave, free, male, female – now, they are all one in the household of Christ Jesus. They did not cease to be male any more than they ceased to be Greek. Jewish females were still both Jewish and female. Category and role distinctions were maintained, because oneness, not sameness, was the sign of unity in this household.

A Post-Industrial Opportunity for the Household of God

The household of God should not be complicated. Intimacy within the household is intricate, delicate, and hard to maintain, but the Church need not be complicated by industrial busyness, programs, workflows, and unnecessary separations. Re-entering and re-structuring the church as an integrated, inter-generational household is not only what our post-industrial age craves, it has a very central part to play in the mission of the church.

When listing qualifications for a bishop, among all the other qualifications, the Apostle Paul devotes the most space to the role of a priest as father.

“[A bishop] must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?”⁸⁵

In other words, overseeing a vestry has far more in common with teaching your children how to load and unload a dishwasher than it does how to manage teams in a Fortune 500 organization.⁸⁶ Faithful presence is the key. The health of the household of God depends upon healthy, thoughtful householding.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ 1 Timothy 3:4-5, ESV.

⁸⁶ This is not condescending to vestry members. Nor am I discounting the wisdom of organizational systems and wisdom. But if I, the rector, have not practiced patience and learned how to model and teach a relatively simple task to my own children, then why should I think I can practice patience and model and teach more complex tasks with my spiritual children in the church? My best experiences in the workplace have also had strong familial cultures.

⁸⁷ There are simplistic and foolish applications of this principle. Various presbyteries in the OPC, for example, have removed pastors from office who have apostate children, see Aimee Byrd, *The Sexual Reformation: Restoring the Dignity and Personhood of Man and Woman*.

Furthermore, the growth of the church, both historically and in our post-industrial society, is dependent upon a return to the church together and each household individually taking seriously our mutual responsibility to one another as fathers and mothers, to children honoring fathers and mothers, and every unique soul living with one another in the household in an understanding way. Even a very surface-level reading of the Acts of the Apostles makes clear that *households* are central to the expansion of the church (no matter how you interpret these texts).

When recounting the expansion of the early church, sociologist and historian Rodney Stark observes the phenomenon of churches showing up out of nowhere in various pagan cities. Where there was no record of a church 100 years before, suddenly there's a church! The expansion of the church, Stark explains, is dependent upon historically insignificant events. The church didn't primarily grow by mass conversions that made the headlines, but by the gradual conversion of households, families and close-knit social groups, having babies, converting friends and family in their small social networks slowly over time.

“[Sociologically] conversion is primarily about bringing one’s religious behavior into alignment with that of one’s friends and relatives, not about encountering attractive doctrines. Put more formally: people tend to convert to a religious group when their social ties to members outweigh their ties to outsiders who might oppose the conversion, and this often occurs before a convert knows much about what the group believes... doctrines can facilitate or hinder conversion, but in the normal course of events, conversion primarily is an act of conformity... This principle has, by now, been examined by dozens of close-up studies of conversion, all of which confirm that social networks are the basic mechanism through which conversion takes place.”⁸⁸

The health and future growth of the church depends upon a return to the *household*, with significant time devoted to meaningful, inter-generational presence together. Fathers and mothers must socialize our children in the household, both in our homes and in the household of God, and this foundational socialization plays a significant role in the re-socialization of our adult children within the Church. Nothing less than the plausibility of living in or leaving the social structure of Christ and his Church is at stake.

There are countless abandoned elementary schools scattered throughout the hills and hollers of West Virginia. Massive, brick-built schools with broken windows and crawling with vines, an apocalyptic picture of our post-industrial opportunity. Behold, today is the favorable time. Behold, now is the day to proclaim the year of our Lord's divine welcome, until He comes again.

⁸⁸ Rodney Stark, *The Triumph of Christianity*, p. 68.

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